



FORT HOOD IS STILL "THE GREAT PLACE"
"THE FUTURE OF THE ARMY BEGINS AT FORT HOOD"

The information contained in this newsletter is researched and provided by the Fort Hood Customer Service Officer, a Management Analyst of the Plans, Analysis and Integration Office, a Special Staff to the Garrison Commander.

Customer Service Incentive Program.

Fort Hood has had in place for quite some time now what's referred to as the *Customer Service Incentive Program*. The intent of the program is to recognize employees internal to the Garrison for exceptional customer service they provide to our installation customers.

Each week, the Fort Hood Customer Service Officer prepares a comment feedback report for both the Garrison and III Corps Commander's review.

A scan of the report produces significant comments that are submitted by customers who mention Garrison employees specifically by name. The content of the comment is evaluated and based on the customer's comments, the comment will be submitted to either the Garrison Commander's staff or the III

Corps Commander's staff. The staff will consider the comment for special recognition by either commander or their designated representative.

Recognition may come in the form of a letter, a coin or just a personal visit and a pat on the back for a job well done.

As this program is managed from the Plans, ANALYSIS AND Integration Office, there are no requirements on anyone external to the PAIO for selection for this special recognition.

Questions regarding this program should be directed to Dale Cowan, Fort Hood Customer Service Officer at 254-288-6260 or dale.w.cowan.civ@mail.mil.

Note: If you are an ICE Manager and one of your employees is mentioned, it's helpful to indicate their full name in the response.



"Dude, stop whining and use ICE!"



Submit Your Comments to: <http://ice.disa.mil>

Don't let your frustration get the best of you! Tell someone about it! If you get "hot behind the collar", cool off by putting it on "ICE!"

New US Army Garrison Brand



The USAG recently solicited the workforce to come up with a slogan/logo (brand) designed to remind the Soldiers, Families, leaders and the community who we are.

There were many submissions and finally a panel decided upon the brand pictured above.

Branding is an effective marketing technique that sums up who we are and what we do and intuitively when heard/seen, triggers an internal attraction to the US Army Garrison Fort Hood.

Entries were judged on their "billboard/slogan design" creativity (brand/slogan) and business logo (design-pix) in support of being thought provoking, attention grabbing and whether it matches our business brand (US Army Garrison) identity with the target audience (III Corps and Fort Hood Soldiers, Families, civilians and community).

The winning entry was announced at the Civilian Recognition Ceremony on 13 September 2012.

The winner was Tanna Lee Jones, Graphic Designer, Family and MWR, Marketing & Advertising.

Congratulations Tanna Lee Jones for being selected as winner of the new USAG-Fort Hood Brand.

Dealing With Difficult Customers, Angry Customers and Just Plain Rude Customers

Those in customer service positions in retail, hospitality (hotel and restaurants), call centers and government have to deal with difficult customers, angry customers, and just plain rude customers on a daily basis. For customer service staff who are not accustomed to this, or lack the training and knowledge to deal with the difficult, angry and rude, the experience can be stressful and make an otherwise enjoyable job, unpleasant, and even intolerable. We've put together a number of techniques, tips, hints, and advice you can apply to various difficult customer situations.

1. Why are some customers so darned difficult and rude?

It's understandable that customer service providers often ask this question: Why do customers act so rudely or aggressively. While it may be an interesting sociological question, I suggest to people that they don't focus on trying to answer the question, since it doesn't really help to address a customer's anger. If they are standing in front of you acting badly, or angrily, knowing that the person is doing this because of sociological trends towards a more aggressive culture does absolutely nothing for you.

Besides, the answers are too varied to be useful with respect to any single customer. A customer might be having a bad day (you have those, right?) and simply get more easily frustrated with you, or the person may have a mental disorder, or be brought up badly by Ma and Pa.

There they stand however, and knowing these kinds of "explanations" doesn't help you cope with the situation productively.

But here's a simple answer. The rude

or angry customer is being human, and human beings are sometimes wonderful, and sometimes annoying and rude.

2. Is there an Ultimate Put-Down for Rude Customers?

First, to answer the question, **no there isn't one**. Second, while the desire to retaliate when someone is rude to us, is both normal and destructive, not to mention childish. Often the anger of the customer comes from the "child place", which is where we tend to go when upset. Responding with a put-down means you end up in the same "child place", and you'll just keep the argument going in a destructive way, with both parties getting more and more childish. It's a bad idea. It will make you more upset (the putdown notion is a fantasy anyway), and you're just asking for trouble.

3. Why do angry customers pick on me, when I don't make the rules?

It's very frustrating to encounter customers who aim their anger and aggression at you, when all you are doing is applying the policies and procedures you have been told to use by your company or organization. The angry customer often directs (or misdirects) anger at you, even though you can't fix things. Believe it or not, angry customers (not all, but many) understand that you are doing your job and that you can't wave a magic wand. So, why do they do it?

Well, the answer is pretty simple. It's not personal. It's just that you are handy. The Vice President might have made the policy, but he or she isn't around, and the customer wants to vent NOW. And there you are - handy as can be.

The important thing to understand is that they are being rude to you because you are a handy target, and they are angry now, and want to
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express that. It's not fair, of course, and it's not even productive, but there you go.

The upside of this (it's a small upside), is that reminding yourself that it's just about you being handy can help you not react with anger back at the customer, which is often the worst thing you can do. It's not personal, so try not to take it personally. After all, the rude customer doesn't even know you. Don't let him ruin your day.

4. What do angry customers really want from me?

Sometimes it seems that it's impossible to figure out what an angry customer really wants from you and your company. It's not uncommon for an angry customer to continue to act out, or be abusive even though you've actually been able to resolve his or her apparent problem. This doesn't make any logical sense on the surface, but it makes perfect "human sense".

It is true that customers want their problem or issue resolved, but their anger doesn't necessarily disappear instantly, when the problem is resolved. That's because angry customers want some other things -- human things, and if they don't get them, they often continue to be difficult.

When you have dealt with an angry customer, you may have asked yourself, "what does this person want from me?", or even perhaps asked the customer this question. It is an important question with a number of answers. Knowing the answers will help you calm down an angry person and reduce hostile behavior directed at you. Learn what angry customers need and want.

Customers want what they want. When we can't give them what they ask for, there are some psychological needs that you can address. Fulfill these needs and you

will reduce hostile behavior.

* They Want Help even if you can't solve their entire problem. If they see you as making a genuine effort on their behalf, they are much less likely to be hostile towards you personally.

* They Want Choices -They do not want to feel helpless, or trapped, or at the mercy of the "system".
.....Offer choices whenever possible.

* They Want Acknowledgment - People want to feel you are making the effort to understand their situation, and their emotional reactions to it. Often, the simple act of acknowledging that a person is upset will help to calm them down, provided the acknowledgment is phrased and "toned" correctly.

5. What are some of the most important principles I should apply when dealing with angry or abusive customers?

There are twelve important principles customer service staff should apply when dealing with and interacting with abusive or angry customers. They are designed to help you shorten the time needed to deal with these customers, reduce your frustrations, keep you safer, all the while helping you provide a positive customer experience even to those customers who are unpleasant.

The twelve principles that you can use to guide your defusing efforts are:

1. Deal with the feelings first
2. Avoid Coming Across as bureaucratic
3. Each situation is different
4. Strive to control the interaction
5. Begin defusing early
6. Be assertive, not aggressive or passive
7. If you lose control of yourself, you lose, period

8. What you focus on, you get more of
9. Don't supply ammunition
10. Don't ask questions you don't want to hear answers to
11. Avoid inadvertent errors
12. Avoid high risk, high gain behavior

6. Why is self-control so important when dealing with difficult customers?

When you have anger or aggressiveness directed at you, there's a natural tendency to respond to the angry customer with your own anger, aggression and frustration. While that's natural, and human, it's also one of the worst things you can do.

When you respond with anger, or lose your self-control, you create a circle of escalation, or an **escalation cycle**. You respond angrily, then the customer ups the ante and increases his or her angry behavior, and the whole interaction gets out of control.

The solution is to use self-control, so you don't get suckered in to wasting time arguing or otherwise feeding into the anger of the customer.

It's to your own benefit. By remaining cool, calm and collected, you save time, frustration, and increase your own personal safety, since escalated conflict is more likely to increase the possibility of physical violence.

Further, when you lose self-control, you make poor decisions, and cannot implement the many hints, tips and techniques available to defuse hostile customers.

Getting caught in the escalation cycle with a customer is one of the worst things that can occur during interactions with customers, particularly if the customer is already difficult or angry.

The escalation cycle occurs when something a customer does or says
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"triggers" an emotional reaction from the employee. The employee, somewhat miffed, responds in a way that escalates the customer's anger and frustration, which, in turn results in their behavior becoming more aggressive. You may be familiar with the term "getting your buttons pushed", and that's exactly what happens. They push your buttons, you push theirs.

The result is that the customer interaction gets out of control. In a worst case scenario, the escalation cycle can result in physical violence or threats.

7. What are possible consequences if I lose my cool and lose self-control with an angry customer?

When you "**lose your cool**" when dealing with an angry or rude customer (we call it getting triggered), you respond either defensively or aggressively, and both types of responses will almost certainly result in your spending more time with the rude or hostile customer. Is that what you want? **Do you like being abused by a customer to the extent that you'd like it to continue?** Then being triggered, or losing your cool is likely to increase the time you spend with that person.

Of course, when you get triggered, it's not good for you company either, since you are less likely to keep a customer (rude or not) when you direct anger at the person.

Perhaps most important is that if you lose your self control you also lose control over the situation, and in the worst case scenario, the situation can escalate into verbal threats, or even personal violence. Physical violence from customers occurs when things get out of control, and the best way to protect yourself is not to lose control of yourself.

It may not be fair that you have to

endure abuse from customers, and not fight back, but **it's in your best interests** not to direct anger back to the rude or aggressive customer.

8. What techniques, hints and advice can I use to maintain my cool and self-control when dealing with an obnoxious customer?

It's not easy to maintain self-control when faced with an obnoxious, difficult or insulting customer. Some people are naturally better at keeping their cool than others, but it is possible to learn to control your own reactions. There are specific techniques and hints.

You can't take control of a hostile situation unless you can control yourself. Review some tactics and strategies that may, or may not be new to you.

One of the most difficult parts of the defusing hostility process is maintaining control over oneself. After all, hostile clients often say things that are personally demeaning or insulting.....If you allow yourself to get angry, and convey that anger to the customer, the situation is more likely to get worse rather than better. Some useful tactics to employ follow. Remember you need to find out what works for you:

- * Identify your triggers
- * Slow down your responses
- * Take a time-out
- * I'm better than that
- * I'm not getting suckered
- * I won't pay the price
- * Put on their shoes
- * Observing
- * Preparing
- * Humor
- * Venting/not venting

9. How can I continue to improve my ability to deal with difficult, aggressive and insulting customers?

Even if you use specific techniques or attend a seminar on the topic of dealing with obnoxious or difficult customers, ultimately, whether you

improve or not is up to you. A workbook or training can get you started, but only you can continue to improve through thinking, practice, and observation. Here are some tips:

* **Remind Yourself** - at the beginning of each working day, remind yourself of one or two defusing tactics you would like to focus upon. It might be not taking the bait, or using a particular empathy statement, or recognizing when it is a good time to refer to a supervisor. It can be whatever you like, provided you choose SOMETHING each day.

* **Review Progress** - we suggest you take a few minutes at the end of the work day to review how you did.

* **Keep A Hostility Diary** - If you want to be a bit more formal, where you record "critical incidents" and how you handled them.

* **Defuse In Your Private Life** - tactics particularly useful in private life include:

- o avoiding bait
- o empathy statements
- o listening statements
- o problem solving tactics
- o avoiding being triggered

* **Talk to Colleagues**

* **Read Other Books**

Information in this article taken from the Customer Service Zone by Bacal and Associates.



THE FORT HOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

September 20, 2012

A Little Humor...

Tech support: Okay, sir, let's press the control and escape keys at the same time. That brings up a task list in the middle of the screen. Now type the letter "P" to bring up the Program Manager.

Customer: I don't have a P.

Tech support: On your keyboard, sir.

Customer: What do you mean?

Tech support: "P" ... on your keyboard, sir.

Customer: I'M NOT GOING TO DO THAT!!

A woman customer called the Canon help desk with a problem with her printer.

Tech support: Are you running it under Windows?

Customer: No, my desk is next to the door, but that is a good point. The man sitting in the cubicle next to me is under a window, and his printer is working fine.

Customer: I can't get on the Internet.

Tech support: Are you sure you used the right password?

Customer: Yes, I'm sure. I saw my colleague do it.

Tech support: Can you tell me what the password was?

Customer: Seven or eight stars, I'm not exactly sure.

Tech support: What's on your monitor now, ma'am?

Customer: A teddy bear my boyfriend bought for me in the supermarket.

A bill collector knocked on the door of a country debtor.

"Is Fred home?" he asked the woman who answered the door.

"Sorry," the woman replied. "Fred's gone for cotton."

The next day the collector tried again. "Is Fred here today?"

"No, sir," she said, "I'm afraid Fred has gone for cotton."

When he returned the third day he humphed, "I suppose Fred is gone for cotton again,?"

"No," the woman answered solemnly, "Fred died yesterday."

Suspicious that he was being avoided, the collector decided to wait a week and investigate the cemetery himself. But sure enough, there was poor Fred's tombstone, with this inscription: "Gone, But Not for Cotton."

While most current computer accessories are wireless or use bluetooth, there was a time when all computer accessories were attached to the actual machine via wires and cables. Here is an ingenious tech support solution from those simpler times.

Customer: My keyboard is not working anymore.

Tech support: Are you sure it's plugged in to the computer?

Customer: No. I can't get behind the computer.

Tech support: Pick up your keyboard and walk 10 paces back.

Customer: OK.

Tech support: Did the keyboard come with you?

Customer: Yes.

Tech support: That means the keyboard is not plugged in. Is there another keyboard?

Customer: Yes, there's another one here. Ah...that one does work.

Do you have a funny joke that is customer service related or an actual experience you would like to share? Send it to me and I will publish it.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR:

THIS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER IS PUBLISHED FOR YOU, THE READER, AND IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE CUSTOMER SERVICE RELATED THOUGHTS AND INSIGHTS TO ENHANCE THE WAY WE SUPPORT OUR SOLDIERS, THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS, RETIREES, VETERANS AND OF COURSE EACH OTHER.

IF ANYONE HAS ARTICLES, STORIES, EXPERIENCES OR OTHER CUSTOMER SERVICE RELATED INFORMATION THAT WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO THOSE WHO READ THIS NEWSLETTER, PLEASE SEND THEM TO ME.



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